

Untitled document

*By KATHY CLEVELAND*

*The Nashua Telegraph, September 11, 2012*

AMHERST – Charles Vars was 13 years old when his uncle was reported missing in action in Korea on Nov. 29, 1950.

Charles Vars had only met his uncle, Christopher Vars, a few times, but he knew his father tried to learn more about what happened to his youngest brother.

Christopher Vars was a sergeant and infantryman in the Army, who had also served during World War II. His life ended during the Chosin Reservoir Campaign, a 17-day battle in the Korean War when thousands of U.S. soldiers died.

After his father died in 2005, Charles Vars continued the quest and a year or so ago contacted the office of congressman Charlie Bass, a Republican.

On Monday morning, the longtime Amherst resident, his wife and daughters and his sister entered the selectmen's meeting room of Town Hall, where Bass and town officials gathered.

Laid out on a table were eight medals that Christopher Vars earned during World War II and Korea: a Purple Heart, a Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge 1st Award, the United Nations Service Medal and the Honorable Service Lapel Button from World War II and the Korean Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars.

"This is incredible," said Charles Vars, who gave a short speech, saying he regrets his father didn't live to see this day.

Until recently, the family "was totally in the dark," he said.

"My dad didn't care to discuss it, because he didn't know much" about Christopher's service or how he died, Charles Vars said.

In 2009, the family received information that the remains of 400 of the Chosin battle soldiers were found in what is now North Korea and also that records from the battle had been burned in a facility in Alexandria, Va., including recommendations for Christopher Vars' medals.

So far, remains of 70 of the Chosin campaign soldiers have been identified, and scientists are working to identify the rest through DNA testing, Vars said.

If it happens that Christopher Vars' are identified, he would be brought home to be buried with Charles' mother and father in Everett, Mass.

The chance of that happening is probably small, Vars said, "but we thought the prospect of this"

referring to his uncle's posthumous honors, "was small."

Bass thanked the family members for their tenacity and said the soldier's service and sacrifice symbolize "what makes this country special."